

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

NORTH COAST DISTRICT
1385 8TH STREET, SUITE 130
ARCATA, CA 95521
PHONE: (707) 826-8950
WWW.COASTAL.CA.GOV



F11a

Prepared April 25, 2023 for the May 12, 2023 Meeting

TO: COASTAL COMMISSIONERS AND INTERESTED PERSONS

FROM: Shana Gray, North Coast Deputy Director
Melissa Kraemer, North Coast District Manager
Peter Allen, Northern California Transportation Program Manager

SUBJECT: Caltrans Informational Briefing on the Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project, Del Norte County

At the May 12, 2023 meeting, the Commission will be given a briefing as part of the North Coast Deputy Director's Report by Caltrans staff on the status of the upcoming Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project. The project site is located along forested steep bluffs of Highway 101 in Del Norte County (post mile 12.0 to 15.5) from about 9 miles south of Crescent City at the northern end to about 6.5 miles north of Klamath at the southern end ([Exhibit 1](#)). For over two decades, the 3.5-mile-long project area has been subject to frequent landslides that necessitate emergency repairs and temporary closures of the roadway. The site is at high risk of a larger landslide that could shut down the roadway completely, severing regional connectivity with no convenient alternative route available.¹

The project area is located within old growth coast redwood forests of Redwood National and State Parks. As such, studying alternative roadway alignments in this highly sensitive roadless region is a complicated and lengthy process. Caltrans has developed seven potential new roadway alternatives based on preliminary studies and input from local stakeholders, including the National Park Service, California State Parks, Tribes, local, state, and federal elected officials from both California and Oregon, permitting and regulatory agency staff, local businesses, and local citizen groups. Alternatives include, but are not limited to, reengineering the existing roadway, constructing a series of retaining walls, and/or constructing a 10,000-ft.-long tunnel ([Exhibit 2](#)).

¹ Vehicular travel between Crescent City and the Humboldt Bay region along Highway 101 through Last Chance Grade is approximately 75 miles. If access along Highway 101 through Last Chance Grade is lost to a catastrophic landslide, travelers between the two regions would have to detour an additional 6 hours and 300 miles.

Caltrans maintains a website for the project with information on the project history, process of developing alternatives, anticipated schedule (construction is currently projected to commence in 2030), and other information: <https://lastchancegrade.com/>. The project will require coastal development permits from the Commission and Del Norte County (or a single consolidated CDP processed by the Commission) and may also require review through the Commission's federal consistency process.

At the May 12, 2023 meeting, Caltrans will update the Commission on the Project, and the Commission will be invited to ask questions and offer preliminary feedback on the latest information presented by Caltrans, including information regarding mitigation opportunities for the Project.

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit 1 – Project Location Map](#)

[Exhibit 2 – Alternatives Analysis Report \(November 2021\)](#)